



DESIGNING A NEW TIER OF CIVIL LEGAL PROFESSIONAL FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVORS



OVERVIEW

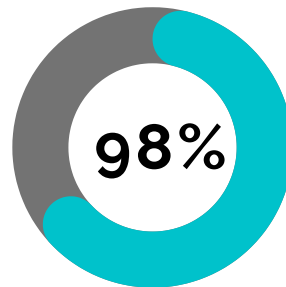
Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse helps nearly 6,000 domestic abuse survivors each year. EmERGE services and support empower participants to break the cycle of violence and rediscover their strength and independence. Lay legal advocacy is a critical part of EmERGE's work. Lay legal advocates are trained to provide information about the civil legal system. The ability to successfully navigate court-involved issues such as divorce, child custody and child support is critical to breaking the cycle of violence. However, participants' legal needs are not fully met through lay advocate services because lay legal advocates cannot provide legal advice.

The **Licensed Legal Advocate pilot** is a partnership with the Arizona Supreme Court that trains and authorizes lay legal advocates at EmERGE! to provide trauma-informed, limited-scope legal advice to domestic violence survivors as **Licensed Legal Advocates (LLAs)**. The proposed pilot removes the barrier imposed by unauthorized practice of law restrictions, giving LLAs the ability to handle the specific legal needs of participants and enhance participants' access to justice.

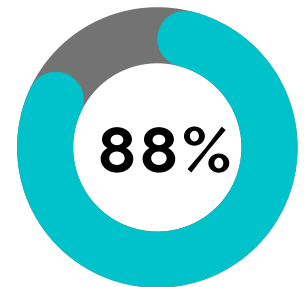


Project Problem Statement:

Should Arizona create a new tier of civil legal professional, and what could that mean for victims of domestic abuse?



of low-income domestic violence survivors experienced at least one civil legal problem in the past year.



of survivors that sought legal help received inadequate or no legal help.



WHAT LLAS CAN DO:

1

Give legal advice on urgent legal issues during initial intake

2

Give legal advice during completion of forms

3

Give legal advice about case preparation

4

Have a seat at the table to quietly advise at court hearings



OUR PROCESS

01

Interviews in the Community

The research team worked with 50+ community members — attorneys, judges, lay legal advocates, social service providers, government representatives, DV survivors, and others — to understand the barriers survivors experience when faced with civil legal issues.

02

Journey & System Mapping

The research team mapped the survivor journey through the civil legal system, as well as the barriers imposed by unauthorized practice of law restrictions and the ripple effects of those barriers across the system.

03

Ideation & Pilot Design

The research team identified intervention opportunities that would empower lay legal advocates to more effectively assist survivors, then focused on four service areas that had broad community support and highest potential for impact.

04

Prototype & Test

The research team then prototyped and tested the components of the LLA model — including scope of service, training / curriculum, education for the bench and bar, and licensing / regulation — with community members and revised the pilot design based on community feedback.



LAUNCH AND CURRENT OPERATIONS

LAUNCHED IN SPRING 2021

The Licensed Legal Advocate pilot received initial funding in late 2019, but launch was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two LLAs at Emerge! began training in Spring 2021 and have been providing services in the field since late Spring 2021. Additional funding has been secured to sustain the pilot through 2024, and i4J expects to train additional advocates in 2023.

EVALUATION PLAN

The LLA pilot is being evaluated through a randomized control trial. Participants at Emerge! are randomly assigned to either a lay legal advocate or a Licensed Legal Advocate. The research team is collecting data from both groups regarding adjudicatory outcomes, time to disposition, participants' perceptions of procedural fairness, advocates' perceptions of effectiveness, and other data relevant to demonstrating the capacity of community-based, non-lawyer advocates to assist with civil justice problem-solving.

IMPACT

The LLA pilot is the first pilot in the United States to empower non-lawyer advocates to provide trauma-informed, limited-scope legal advice to domestic violence survivors. LLAs help survivors navigate the legal system to obtain child support, spousal maintenance, and fair and equitable property and debt divisions; this pilot will produce research regarding the benefits to survivors when unauthorized practice of law policies are adapted to permit non-lawyer advocacy. The pilot has been widely cited as a model, including articles by the American Bar Association Journal, Democracy Journal, NPR, Bloomberg Law, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System and Arizona Attorney magazine.